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High-level statement on the post-2015 development agenda and expected sustainable development goals in the ECE region

1. The seventieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2015 is a milestone for international and regional cooperation. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the significant transitions the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region has gone through during that period and the new challenges and opportunities it is facing in an increasingly globalized world. Gathered together as member States for the sixty-sixth session of ECE, we are unified in our commitment to the implementation of an ambitious programme for sustainable development in the region.

2. ECE has 56 member States that geographically cover a large portion of the northern hemisphere and economies that account for about half of the global combined gross domestic product. Our region brings together economically advanced countries with developing countries and has experienced a time of unprecedented economic development and prosperity over the past decades. However, all have also faced economic, social and environmental challenges in recent years and are focused on the necessary transformations to realize and strengthen economic growth, job creation and environmental sustainability.

3. ECE has proved itself to be an important factor in these developments as a results-driven organization that develops best practices and standards and services agreements that serve as catalysts for action in its member States and around the world. ECE is ideally placed to continue to make a strong contribution to sustainable development by:

(a) **Increasing connectivity**, which is essential for sustainable development in today's world and to maximize the benefits of globalization. To accomplish this, ECE will further strengthen and ensure the implementation of the 58 United Nations land-transport agreements to *promote affordable, safe, clean,* efficient and well integrated inland transport systems and policies; further contribute to efficient border crossing facilitation and international freight transport; and continue developing vehicle regulations and standards to promote road safety, energy efficiency and intelligent transport systems;

(b) **Strengthening the sustainable management of ecosystems and natural resources**, by managing and developing its 5 multilateral environmental conventions and 12 protocols, including on air pollution, transboundary water protection and use, industrial

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accidents, environmental impact assessment and public access to information; and, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ECE contributes to the sustainable management of forests in the region and fosters the contribution of forests to a green economy;

(c) **Improving competitiveness** by continuing its support to public-private partnerships, entrepreneurship and innovation that will help to further mobilize private resources, promote corporate responsibility, and advance a knowledge-based innovation economy; by further developing, maintaining and supporting the implementation of its numerous international standards and recommendations that facilitate global trade, including the codes and lingua franca that are the backbone of electronic business and trade, and more than 100 international agricultural quality standards, which contribute to the increased efficiency of trade and economic integration in the region;

(d) **Supporting sustainable energy and resilient communities**, including through energy standards, such as the ECE international resources classifications, best practices for coal mine methane management and cleaner electricity production from fossil fuels and natural gas, mapping concrete measures and the promoting of technologies and standards to significantly improve renewable energy and energy efficiency, and the development of smart grids in the region. ECE will also continue to develop effective tools and recommendations to sustainable urban development, smart cities, land management and administration, and energy efficient housing;

(e) **Contributing to an effective framework to measure and monitor sustainable development** by developing high-quality data and modern statistical production building on the more than 20 statistical standards adopted by the Conference of European Statisticians, including indicators for measuring poverty, demographic changes and gender equality issues, and recommendations to measure sustainable development that help national statistical offices to produce and analyse data. The ECE environmental performance reviews are a valuable and well recognized monitoring mechanism. This experience can contribute toward an effective framework for monitoring and accountability.

4. Across these various sectors, ECE embraces a multistakeholder approach and will remain committed to creating and facilitating engagements and partnerships between experts from governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. ECE will also further mainstream gender in all its activities and promote the empowerment of women.

5. As ECE member States, we are committed to sustainable development from the local to the global level. In line with the universal character of the post-2015 development agenda, the sustainable development goals will be global while implementation will be largely the responsibility of individual countries. As such, the regional commissions can play an important bridging role and ECE has the commitment and experience to help implement in the region, within its agreed mandate, this agenda for sustainable development for current and future generations. With this vision in mind, ECE will build on its unique experience and expertise in different aspects of sustainable development, further its efforts to promote linkages between different aspects of the Commission's work, and strengthen its cross-sectoral activities.